

IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDING. Madam Speaker, the Foreign Affairs Committee heard last week about the tremendous challenges that remain in order to verify Iran's compliance with any possible final nuclear agreement.

Should a deal be reached, the most stringent compliance, verification, and notification standards must be in place, including regular reporting to Congress. As I have said many times on this floor, I firmly believe Iran has no inherent right to enrich any nuclear material and that any deal should completely dismantle their nuclear infrastructure.

A potential agreement would likely be hailed by this administration—an administration that puts politics before policy—as a foreign policy victory, which leads to an important question: Can this administration be trusted to uphold any compliance regime and fully inform Congress and the American people of even the smallest infraction by the regime in Tehran?

If Iran commits even the smallest infraction, such as installing one centrifuge above the deal's limits, will this administration blow the whistle and jeopardize a deal in which they have invested so much political capital?

This administration has shown, most recently with their Taliban prisoner swap, that they have no problem flaunting their responsibility to timely inform and consult Congress of their actions, but with a deal like the Iranian nuclear negotiation that has far-reaching national security implications, this administration must not leave the people's Representatives in the dark.

ISSUES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to address issues in the Middle East. The President has been criticized for the fact that we do not have a large residual force in Iraq and that we do not have a status of forces agreement with the Iraqi Government.

Let us take note that it was President George Bush who installed Prime Minister Maliki in May of 2006. President George Bush's decision to allow Maliki to take power and to allow him to keep power is directly responsible for most of the woes facing Iraq today.

Maliki was so malevolent that, throughout 2006, 2007, and 2008, he refused to enter into a long-term status of forces agreement with the United States and with President Bush. He insisted that any troops that remained in Iraq after 2011 would be subject to Iraqi kangaroo courts and could be executed

on trumped-up charges. Obviously, we couldn't leave our troops in Iraq under those circumstances.

It is Maliki that is the source of the problem, and it is President Bush that is the source of Maliki. To say that President Obama should be able to negotiate a long-term agreement with Maliki when President Bush was unable to do so is utterly absurd.

As to Sergeant Bergdahl, it is important for us to note that, while we have just released five prisoners from Guantanamo, President Bush released over 500 from Guantanamo, and virtually all of them were dangerous.

Over 100 of them are on the battlefield—and we know where on the battlefield they are—waging war against the United States and its allies. Most of the other 500 are also waging war against us; it is just that our intelligence isn't good enough to say exactly where on the battlefield they are located.

What did President Bush get for the release, not of five, but 500 dangerous prisoners from Guantanamo? Nothing, except a thank you from their native governments.

Now, on legal issues, we are told that section 1035 of the National Defense Authorization Act required President Obama not to release the five prisoners until 30 days after he notified Congress.

Even if he had followed those exact words, instead of releasing the five a few hours after Sergeant Bergdahl was in our hands, we would have released them a few weeks after Sergeant Bergdahl was back in our hands, hardly of great significance.

More importantly, the President has the constitutional right, as Commander in Chief, to engage in prisoner exchanges. In fact, the last Republican Attorney General of the United States, Michael Mukasey, said that very thing just recently.

The President was on firm legal ground in deciding he had the authority to take this action without a 30-day notification of Congress. That being said, it would have been preferable if President Obama had, in fact, discussed the matter with key congressional leaders.

America is strongest when the President views Congress as a source of counsel, a source of advice, rather than a group of enemies to be notified only when such notification is explicitly compelled by congressionally valid statutes.

Whether this deal is a good deal, time will tell. It was a judgment call, but the President could have benefited from the counsel of Congress. It is particularly insulting for some to say that Congress is not a source of counsel, but just a source of leaks.

Keep in mind that 16 congressional leaders knew that we had ascertained the hiding place of Osama bin Laden, and that information did not leak from Congress.

I hope, in the future, President Obama and future Presidents consult

key Members of Congress when making a difficult decision.

We are told that we don't negotiate with terrorists. Nothing could be further from the truth. President Bush negotiated with each and every terrorist regime, each and every identified state sponsor of terrorism—Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, North Korea.

The Bush administration paid a ransom to an al Qaeda affiliate for the release of Martin and Gracia Burnham. Secretary Colin Powell designated the Afghan Taliban as an organization authorized for legal negotiations.

Now, it is also said that a prisoner exchange alerts our enemies to the fact that we value our prisoners, that we will not want to leave anyone on the battlefield, as if this is news disclosed to the world in June of 2014. The fact is we have always valued those detained by the enemy, and the enemy has always known that.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS SET GREAT EXAMPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GALLEGOS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLEGOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to take note not only of a wonderful victory, but of a great example. The most popular NBA team in the 23rd District and one of the most popular NBA teams in the entire country, the San Antonio Spurs, are now the NBA champions, for the fifth time—the drive for five.

There are some interesting things that Congress and the American people can learn from the Spurs. It is the most culturally diverse team in the NBA. In addition to Americans, there are folks from Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, and Australia.

Tim Duncan, who has spent his entire career with the San Antonio Spurs, started out playing basketball in the ninth grade, after he was not able to swim anymore because the swimming pool he used in the Virgin Islands was destroyed.

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None of the players are among the highest paid in the league. In fact, Tony Parker is the highest paid player and he ranked number 37 in the NBA. Five championships, some heartbreakingly close calls. In fact, last year they lost in the very last minute, but they never gave up. They continued working. They came back, and this year they won it all.

The Spurs have the greatest coach in the NBA. Coach Popovich has been in San Antonio since 1996. He is the longest-tenured active coach in all Big Four sports leagues, and he has the most consecutive winning seasons, including playoffs, of any coach in the NBA—17.

The Spurs have so much they can share. Their cultural diversity is their strength. They won because they played together and they played as a